

LAMBDA

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"War and space exploration are alternative uses of the assertive, exploratory energies that are so characteristic of human beings. They may also be mutually exclusive because if one occurs on a massive scale, the other probably will not."

- Frank White, The Overview Effect, 1981

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SCIENCE FICTION



LAMBDA FEATURE

Pages 3 - 12

IN LAMBDA, TIME AND SPACE HAVE NOT EXISTED SINCE 1961

Laurentian Parking Tickets Change Over to City of Greater Sudbury By-Law Tickets

By Mat Thompson
Editor In Chief

About one month ago, students were shocked when they arrived at their cars and found City of Greater Sudbury parking tickets on their vehicles instead of the usually discarded small blue internal tickets. What seemed to catch most students off-guard was not the fact that these tickets would have to be paid at the courthouse downtown, but rather that they would have to be paid at all. No longer can Laurentian students ignore parking violations. City of Sudbury tickets come with a heavy fine if not paid within a certain amount of time. The free ride for many is finally over.

For over six years now, Laurentian University's own Security force has been handing out

internal tickets which were paid, or appealed internally. Now, Laurentian's Security force has reverted back to City of Sudbury by-law tickets. Although more of a hassle for Laurentian students, this change is a much better way to go for the Security force. Instead of ignoring tickets and parking wherever they want, people now must park and pay or risk paying downtown instead.

Originally, Laurentian University switched from City by-law tickets to the internal ticketing system due to the fact that there was no revenue in the City tickets for the Security force. The money collected was not seen by Laurentian, and since it was our own Security that was issuing the tickets, Laurentian saw no use in these tickets. Now,

six years later, Laurentian Security and The City of Greater Sudbury have come up with a cost sharing agreement where Security gets a percentage of every ticket issued and paid.

Many students have voiced their concern over the school's hiking of parking fees and are now denouncing this issuing of City tickets as another money grab, but what they don't understand is that Security does not receive any money from the school for their lots and renovations. All the money that is used by Security comes from the users, those students who either purchase parking passes, or park illegally. There is no part of the students' tuition or incidental fees that goes towards parking.

Recently, there have been a lot of problems with students parking illegally. Students have begun making their own spots on sidewalks, or in illegal areas. With the new ticketing system, these students will have to pay their tickets, or risk not being able to update their plates and registration. A lot of people haven't thought about this, but hopefully they will keep that in the back of their mind when they park their cars on the corner across from the Great Hall, or when they create spots by The Frasier Auditorium or at the Phys Ed Centre.

The Security Office will no longer hear any appeals by students over their tickets as, once they are written, they are to be handled by the Provincial Offences Offices, Downtown Sudbury (by Cactus Pete's). Appeals will only be heard at the Courthouse on Elm Street and the fines paid in the Provincial Offences Offices. Other than issuing the tickets, the rest of the process is external to the Security and Parking Office.

This last year, the Frasier Auditorium parking lot was renovated as part of the five-year renovation plan that Security and Parking put into effect. The pay-to-park area was expanded as there weren't many spots originally. The lot was also expanded by over one hundred spots, bringing the waiting

list for students down from three years to one year for a spot.

Originally, the plan was to have the entire school's parking facilities renovated within five years, but due to expanding prices, the plan has been moved to a ten year plan. Although the prices of renovation have almost doubled, Security has guaranteed that there will be no discussion of an increase in parking fees until 2004, a promise made when the original parking fee hike took place.

What a lot of students don't know is that although parking fees doubled a few years back, Laurentian still has one of, if not the lowest priced parking in Ontario. It may not seem like it, but the price to park in some areas of Laurentian for an entire year only amounts to the price to park for one month at other, larger universities.

One major problem this year has been students parking and leaving their cars in the turn-around area in front of the Parker Building. Many students leave their car there for a few minutes to even hours thinking that they are just running in to do something quick. What many don't think about is that this is the main pick-up location for the Handi-Transit, the bus service for students and faculty who are disabled in some way. There have been many instances where the Transit could not gain access to the area to pick up their passengers.

The area in front of the Parker Building is technically a fire route and cars parked there will now be ticketed and towed if left long enough. The school can be fined up to \$10,000 if they are not enforcing this fire route, and we have been told that they will be watching this area more than others to make sure vehicles are not left so that the Handi-Transit can gain access.

Laurentian's Chief of Security Larry Denomme sat down with Lambda to discuss the current state of the tickets as well as the problems they have faced over the last while. He told us that a lot of students were mad about the price increase, but after hearing the five

year plan, they were impressed by what was being done.

"There was good feedback to the Frasier renovations," he told Lambda. There are still some problems with students driving over sidewalks to avoid paying and students making their own spaces, but these students are being not only warned, but ticketed.

Security and Parking has also been in discussions as to parking for not only the double cohort next year, but also parking for the Northern Ontario Medical School, once it is in place. They told Lambda that it has been discussed and they feel that they are ready for the expanded student population next year, as well as expanded parking for the Medical School.

What the Security and Parking Office hopes will happen with these new tickets is for students to start parking properly and for them to have to pay for not following the law. Many students have graduated without ever paying any of their parking fines, but now that cannot happen.

Some students have already learned that parking illegally will not be tolerated as not only were they ticketed, but their cars were towed from the illegal areas at the owners' expense. What many haven't thought about is that the new ticketing system is an easier way for Laurentian Security to enforce the rules on campus and for students to have to face the consequences for breaking these rules.

Those who have paid for parking passes don't want to see someone's pick-up truck parked on a sidewalk, or a car parked beside a rock embankment or snow drift, blocking access to walkways and buildings. If these students feel that they don't have to follow the rules, the court system will surely have no problem showing them what it's like to break rules and laws in the real world outside Laurentian University.

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Jupiter & Saturn are Easy, Enjoyable Targets into April

by Joe Rao
SPACE.com

Mighty Jupiter continues to dominate the night sky while dazzling Saturn is also relatively easy to find. The next few weeks offer some of the best viewing opportunities for these two rewarding sky targets.

The visually brilliant Jupiter will sit directly underneath a waxing gibbous Moon tonight, March 14. The two objects are very far apart in space, of course, but in our sky they'll be separated by less than 4 degrees at 8 p.m. EST (in fact, they will travel almost this close together across the sky, east to west, from dusk until they set, around 4 a.m.

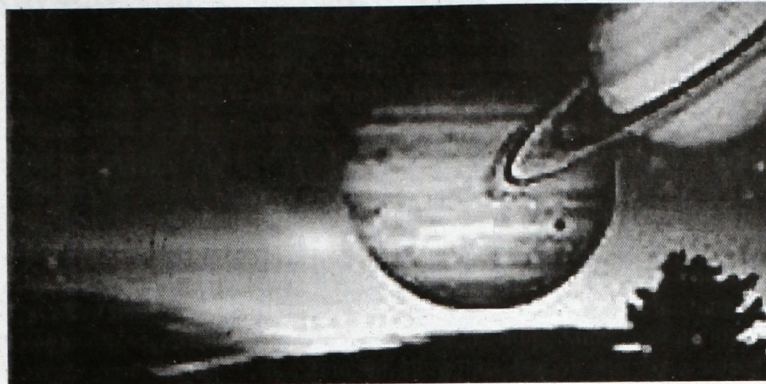
During the late fall and winter Jupiter and Saturn were at their arguable best when they reached their respective oppositions to the Sun (Saturn on Dec. 17, Jupiter on Feb. 2). At opposition, a planet is directly opposite Earth in relation to the Sun, so that all three objects line up in space. Besides shining at their very brightest during these events, and appearing largest in telescopes, these two planets were visible for the entire night, rising at sunset, attaining their highest point in the sky at midnight and setting at sunrise.

But there are three reasons why the views of Saturn and Jupiter may be even better now and in the coming weeks.

First is the weather factor. During winter temperatures on many nights for most parts of the country were no doubt quite cold to downright frigid, making prospective observers extremely uncomfortable. Now with spring arriving March 21, there is the promise of some moderating temperatures.

The second reason is the placement of the planets. Weeks ago, you would have had to wait until late in the evening or the middle of the night for Saturn and Jupiter to climb high up into the sky. Now, that wait is over. Both planets are well situated for viewing as soon as it gets dark.

This is especially true in the case of Saturn, which arrived at east quadrature on March 13. Quadrature occurs when a planet, as seen from the Earth, forms a right angle with respect to the Sun. This means that when the Sun sets in the west, Saturn is reaching its highest point in the southern sky. It also means now is



also a good time to see the shadow of the planet cast farthest to its eastern side, giving the planet and its rings a greater depth in appearance.

The third reason is that Saturn and Jupiter will be especially "showy" in the days ahead, especially during the first week of April when Jupiter is positioned very near to the beautiful Beehive Star Cluster, while Saturn tips its rings to the their maximum toward Earth.

Here are the details:

Jupiter

The largest planet in our solar system glares high toward the south at dusk during the evening hours. The brightest "star" in the sky after Venus, Jupiter invites inspection the moment you set up a telescope. It then descends toward the west for much of the rest of the night.

As seen from Earth, Jupiter is retrograding, or moving west through the dim stars of the faint zodiacal constellation of Cancer, the Crab. By the end of March it will lie less than a degree away from the famous Beehive Star Cluster, which appears as a swarm of stellar points in binoculars and should make for a pretty sight.

On April 3, Jupiter ends its retrograde (westward) motion among the stars and will begin moving slowly away from the Beehive and toward the east.

As we noted back in January, Jupiter has the largest apparent disk of any bright object in the sky after the Moon and the Sun. Its dark cloud belts and bright zones, with their subtle markings, resolve into a series of red, yellow, tan and brown shadings in most good-sized telescopes.

Jupiter's four large and bright moons can be followed for hours, even in steadily held binoculars. Through a telescope you can watch as they speed in front of

Jupiter, throwing their shadows on the planet, or vanish behind its disk or suddenly becoming eclipsed by its shadow. [Use Starry Night software to plot the moons' positions at any moment, on any night.]

Saturn

In Taurus, the Bull, Saturn is readily visible as a yellowish-white zero magnitude "star" high in the south-southwest sky at dusk. The planet is visible during the first half of the night. Even a small telescope will provide a wonderful view of Saturn's beautiful ring system, now tilted practically to their maximum toward Earth.

In fact, on the evening of April 7, the same night that a fat crescent Moon will appear to ride well above Saturn, the maximum "Saturnicentric latitude of Earth" will finally be attained. Put simply, Saturn's ring system will be open at their widest to Earth (27°).

Such extremes generally come at approximately 15-year intervals, with the last such occasion in September 1988 and the next not coming until October 2017. Because of this extreme and fortuitous tilt, Saturn's ring system is displayed broadly with chilling elegance all through the balance of March and on through April.

For the first time since 1988 you'll be able to see Saturn's outer ring, the A Ring, completely encircling the planet's disk (at lesser tilts, a portion of even this outermost ring is obscured by the planet itself). The rings will appear to hide the north end of the planet, while sticking out a bit from behind the south end.

Right now the full southern side of the rings are facing Earth, but not for long. After this year the rings will slowly begin to pitch back toward an edge-on configuration, as seen from Earth. By the summer of 2009 the rings will be exceedingly difficult to see.

Jupiter's Moon Count Soars to 52 with Four New Discoveries

by Robert Roy Britt
Space.com

The tally of Jovian moons has soared to 52 with the discovery of four small moons added to eight that were previously revealed last week. The total may represent roughly half of all the giant planet's satellites larger than 0.62 miles (1 kilometer).

The discoveries were made by a team led by Scott Sheppard and David Jewitt of the University of Hawaii's Institute for Astronomy. They came fast and furious, in three separate revelations beginning March 5.

"We haven't even had a press release about the satellites," Jewitt said in an e-mail interview. "We just put up a web site and then we start getting calls from all over the world. People love this stuff, as we do."

Included in the latest batch are two rocks estimated to be just 0.62 miles (1 kilometer) in diameter. These are the first Jovian satellites calculated to be less than 2 kilometers. Jupiter has 29 moons that are no more than 2.5 miles (4 kilometers) wide and several more that aren't much bigger. These small satellites are thought to be captured asteroids or chunks of larger objects that broke apart, though their exact origins have not been determined. Many of them orbit in a direction opposite the planet's rotation.

SPACE.com asked Jewitt if the tiny objects deserve to be called moons at all, or whether perhaps a new class of object should be conjured to account for the micromoons.

"No," Jewitt said to the latter suggestion. "To me they're all natural satellites. Is a small dog not a dog because it is small?"

Jewitt estimates that Jupiter might have 100 satellites down to the 1-kilometer range, though he stresses that this is just a guess. Countless smaller rocks and bits of dust are in the planet's gravitational clutches.

No other planet has more known satellites. Saturn has 30, Uranus 21 and Neptune 11. Each of these planets likely harbors more moons that have not been spotted because the planets are farther out in the solar system and harder to examine.

Mars has two moons and Earth has just one, although a separate effort recently uncovered a quasi-moon that carves an odd path that is gravitationally bound to our planet. Pluto also has a moon, Charon.

Jupiter has four large satellites, too, called the Galilean moons for their discoverer. The largest is Ganymede, which is about 3,270 miles (5,262 kilometers) wide.

The new satellites are named S/2003 J1 through S/2003 J12. Jewitt said his team will continue its search and he expects more discoveries. Using the Subaru and Canada-France-Hawaii telescopes on Mauna Kea in Hawaii, the team has found 35 Jovian satellites in recent years.



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Editor's Corner

"If once you start down the dark path, forever it will dominate your destiny"

-Yoda to Luke Skywalker, The Empire Strikes Back

I have never been a big sci-fi type of guy. I never really cared about the whole Star Trek genre and reading anything by Orson Scott Card or Douglas Adams doesn't interest me as much as a good mystery novel by Gregory McDonald or Janet Evanovich (recommended reading). All my friends are sci-fi nuts and will kill an entire weekend playing Robotech or discussing the finer points of the Borg. I guess it's all lost on me. Well, except for one thing... Star Wars.

A lot of you younger students have to understand that I was brought up on this stuff. I'm one of the original Star Wars generation. A lot of people claim that they are part of this, but I saw the original Star Wars in the theatre on its first run. Now before you gasp at how old I am, let me explain that I was three years old and have barely any recollection of it. Actually, I don't remember the theatre at all, or who took me (I was told it was my Dad and Nannie). I have been told the story a hundred times or more.

I was a hyperactive little kid. Actually, that would be an understatement. I was one of those kids that today would probably be drugged and told they had a learning disability or attention deficit disorder or some other way of trying to control the natural activity of a child. Nothing could ever keep me still. Nothing could keep me from getting into anything. Then my parents took me to Star Wars.

I'm told that I sat still from the very first shot of Darth Vader until the end of the last credit. I was only three, but I had been transported into a world that was so very far from my own, but just as imaginative as the one I lived in on a daily basis. Star Wars was the only thing better than my own imagination.

The first actual memory of going to the theatre with my family was at the Lambton Mall Theatre during the opening week of Empire Strikes Back. I remember it like it was yesterday. My parents tried to take my older sister and I to the mall for some new shoes, but they made the mistake of bringing us in the door

by the theatre. The first thing I noticed was the poster for Empire. I remember my parents telling me that the movie wasn't playing yet and it was just an advertisement. Nice try; never lie to a six year old!

I remember every memory of the first Star Wars flooding through my brain as if I had watched it a million times. My entire body went into Star Wars withdrawal and I needed a fix. We stood for what was maybe thirty seconds outside the theatre before my parents tried to move us along. Just as they took my hand to get me moving, one of the two doors opened to the actual theatre and I saw it. The door was a little ways away, and the screen was even further, but I saw the opening credits to Episode 5 and I heard the music. The music was like a drug for me. I needed it!

So like any normal six and eight year old would do, my sister and I threw a fit so big that they had to take us in right away. Now, when I am at the mall nowadays and I see kids throwing fits I always think that they should be tied, gagged and locked in a cage until they are twelve, but I guess back then I had a different outlook on the 'kid fit'.

I think it maybe took about a minute to convince my parents to take us in. We charged the theatre and with popcorn and drinks in hand, we entered the theatre with the usher. It's funny that I remember the usher with his uniform and flashlight, but at that time the flashlight looked like a lightsaber pointing the way to our seats. He was like a God allowing me to sit with a select few to view the next installment of what would be the defining movie of my short life.

We got in once Luke was already hanging upside down and the snow creature (Banta... I think) was about to kill him. I had only been in the theatre for maybe thirty seconds, but I was already hooked. Everything about that movie made me love the series more and more. Yoda, Han Solo frozen, Jabba the Hutt and probably the first and strongest crush I had ever had... Princess Leia in the slave costume. A lot of you may think it's weird, but

every generation has that picture of a certain female s that turned on that little pa in their young minds tha made them see a woman as more than a mother figure. For me and probably millions of others it was Princess Leia.

When I look back, Star Wars defined so many things about me that are still a part of me today. I'm not talking about the whole "Everything I Know Learned From Star Wars" lists, but my actual character.

I collected Star Wars figures and playsets and once all the moves had come out, my entire basement had been transformed into the entire Star Wars galaxy. My dad and I set up every playset all over the basement, making sure everything was exact. Hoth was near Degobah with Tatooine across the room and the Death Star in the middle. There were white sheets on the floor around Hoth to create the snow effects and drawings of trees and desert on the walls behind the Tatooine and Endor playsets. The basement was my own world and I would be lost in it for days. I created and recreated the action and even began scripting out the action before it would happen.

In school, we had a room in the library that we would go to write and draw and just create on a one on one basis with volunteers. This was the greatest room in the world as they weren't telling us what to do, but they were letting us be creative. I would draw, write about and cut out any pictures from Star Wars that I could. I actually still have some of the stories in a box at home with my drawings and very simple stories where Chewbacca would always save the day.

My friend and I always made up Star Wars plays for our parents and classes and whenever we could watch one of the movies, everything would be on hold in our lives. Star Wars opened up the creative part of my brain and left the



door open to this day. I began reading, writing and creating because of Star Wars. I was six and I was writing stories that I thought were just as good, or even better than the ones that George Lucas had created. And I kept writing and writing.

My first year at Laurentian was the year they re-released the first three movies and I was there opening night to see them. I sat with my roommate Liza who was a huge fan as well and the second those first few words hit the screen, I was six again and I couldn't wait to see Han Solo, Chewbacca, Leah, Luke, C3P0 and R2D2 take on the evil, yet damn cool, Darth Vader, Boba Fett and the Stormtroopers. The movies weren't just movies to me: they were three of the defining moments in my young life.

Star Wars grabbed me and my generation by the imagination and gave us a surge that can never be duplicated. There has never been a movie since Star Wars that has ever affected me the way Star Wars did. Nothing will ever beat those movies, and whether or not it made you a sci-fi fan, every kid that went to the theatre to see those movies came out a changed person. I am a part of the Star Wars generation, and we are easy to spot. Do you know why? Because the Force is strong within us!

Mat Thompson
Editor In Chief

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It's time for a Science Fiction

Anime Invasion

by Matt Kent
Fictional Editor

Wow, I never thought I'd see the day that I would do a column on anime. For the longest time, my concept of anime was stupid little shows like Dragonball Z and Pokemon. Then one day I saw an advertisement around Christmas time that the Cartoon channel would be showing some of Anime's greatest flicks, so I figured why not give it a chance? I was pleasantly surprised to say the least.

Macross Plus directed by Shôji Kawamori is based on the old Robotech Macross episodes. It's a continuation taking place 31 years later, and centered around three people: two test pilots and a music producer. The three were once great friends, but a bitter fight when they were still young drove them apart to different parts of the galaxy.

Ever since the initial Zentraedi attack in the first episode, Earth has been spreading her people in preparation of another attack. Eden, a planet only ten light years from Earth, has become the most technologically advanced planet in the frontier. On this planet the two test pilots Isamu Dayson and Guld Goa Boman are part of a competition to design the next transforming fighter, a jet that transforms into a huge robot. (This was my first exposure to a recurring theme in anime, giant fighting robots). The YF-19 and YF-21 are the two potential fighters. Ever since the disagreement so many years ago, Dayson and Boman refuse to cooperate and fight after fight ensues, both on and off the training field. Despite their constant fighting, the two manage to help their respective companies develop the fighters, that is until the final corner of the love triangle is added.

Myung Fan Lone, a producer for the newest cyber musician Sharon Apple comes to Eden and brings with her a whole new set of problems. When Dayson and Boman find out that Myung is here, they both try to do what they feel is best, and that's to keep each other away from her. Many giant robots were hurt in the filming of this movie as the two pilots battle each other and their own emotions. As if that weren't enough, the artificial intelligence unit that houses Sharon Apple comes to life — or more accurately, Sharon comes to life. She sees the three ex-friends together and feels an emotion she was never intended to feel, that she was never programmed to feel. Someone begins making phone calls to the pilots directing them to Myung's apartment and office, and someone sets her office ablaze. This movie is a romance, suspense, action and buddy flick all rolled into one.

Kawamori is a man with a vision unlike any other. This movie was released in Japan in 1994 and there has yet to be a film to rival it. The detail and beauty of the world he has created is simply breathtaking, and the skill with which the action scenes are animated would take your breath away. This movie has been labeled the best animated film ever created, and it well deserves this title, for the way in which the characters grow and interact is so realistic. This isn't a cartoon for children, since it's got foul language, blood, fighting and more, all the makings of a real movie. He didn't try to soften any aspects of the movie, nor should he have. Go out and buy the special DVD version with the 5.1 Dolby surround sound; you'll be spellbound.

Nadesico: Martian Successor created by Kia Asamiya

Earth is a little overpopulated and resources are running out, so we decide to colonize the moon and Mars. Everything is going great until a military encounter with a race of beings known as the Jovian Lizards results in the Mars colony being completely destroyed. The only survivor known to those on Earth is Akito, a former pilot who is so plagued by nightmares and his fears that the only thing left for him is a career as a chef. Since the property damage on Mars was so high, and since the Jovians had turned the focus of their attacks to the Moon and eventually Earth, Nergal, the most powerful weapons manufacturer on the planet, decides they should build their own ship, the Nadesico, and staff it with the best civilians they can find. This is where the movie sort of falls apart. The crew is so mismatched they make the Odd Couple look like twins. This is also where my main complaint with anime comes out. In a movie that's serious and well done, but the creators feel it's necessary to put in a bunch of goofy characters who spend more time obsessing about themselves than their mission.

Akito remembers that he and the captain of the ship were best friends when they were only children, but he also remembers that he left the Mars colony shortly before the Jovian attack which resulted in the death of his parents. The movie focuses closely on Akito's battle with his inner demons, as well as his habit of having friends die in battle. Besides becoming the ship's cook, Akito also pilots his interceptor/fighter ships called Aestivalis units. The lad has a gift for piloting fighters and does extremely well in battle when he is in control of his fears.

This movie is full of plot twists and fun little side stories and would have ranked before Macross were it not for the stupid little flaws, like the characters running around like morons trying to impress each other. It's not a fantastic movie, but it's still pretty damn good.

For more suggestions on anime movies go visit
the folks at Comics North!

Scientist Drills Down to the Science of 'The Core'

By Seth Shostak
Senior Astronomer, SETI Institute

Of all the things that threaten life on this planet, this is one you probably didn't consider: Earth's internal hydrodynamics could go nuts.

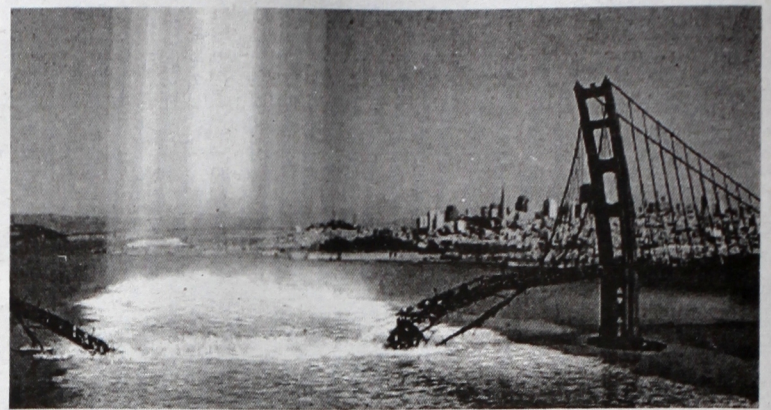
Unbelievable, you say? Tell that to the popcorn-wolfing crowds at the local 'plex, as they enthusiastically take in the Spring's first sci-fi disaster film, "The Core."

Sure, this movie is a cut-and-paste pastiche of a dozen other disaster films, and yes, it seems to run out of ideas two-thirds of the way through. But nobody's perfect, and while it would be easy to be rotten to "The Core" based on its disregard for science, this film has enough laughs and forward motion to make it a perfect film to see on an evening when your brain is in "Park."

Imagine this: It's Green World Day in Boston, and the local populace is innocently cavorting in the streets. Moments later, watches stop, pacemakers freeze, and pigeons turn into feathered kamikazes, all because Earth's hot and heavy liquid core has ceased spinning. Bummer, huh?

Well apparently it is a bummer, because the consequence of stifling the slow slosh of a billion trillion tons of molten iron is a nasty change in our planet's magnetic field. You might think this would be of interest only to Boy Scouts still without GPS, but as the experts in "The Core," will solemnly tell you, when Earth's magnetic field runs amuck, lightning-laced superstorms will be on the loose and "microwaves from space, no longer impeded by a magnetic field, will cook our planet." [Note: you read it here first. Microwaves from space will cook our planet.]

OK, this is all hogwash, but hey, how many times have you seen Rome fried by static electricity? Or watched incredulously as the Golden Gate Bridge drops its span? (This



Now that's a car wash!

Hollywood destruction of a Bay Area icon is, of course, just one more salvo in the continuing culture war between southern and northern California.)

Clearly there's a problem. So what does society do when disaster from down under threatens to obliterate all life? The answer is old and obvious: They bring in a group of brilliant misfits; a tiger team of social marginalia who, despite being pretty rough around the edges, have the brains, brawn, and special skills to rekindle fluid flow 2,500 miles below our feet. It's the Dirty Dozen with PhD's.

Leader of the pack is Joshua Keyes, a professor at the University of Chicago. He teaches freshman geophysics (is that a required course for freshmen these days?) Keyes quickly points out that "there's no way to restart the flow. And even if there was, we couldn't get to the core." Right on both counts, but who cares about that? After all, the heart of this movie is an expedition to tunnel to the Earth's molten middle, and cure it of its bad behavior. To do this, they'll use Tinsel Town's all-purpose cure for any natural disaster: nuclear weapons. Nukes have been lobbed at hostile space aliens, dropped on defrosted prehistoric monsters, and detonated within killer asteroids. Why not use 'em for spinning up a boat load of hot iron?

Because they won't do the

job, that's why. I reckon that the kinetic energy of Earth's liquid core is about ten billion times as much as released by the biggest H-bomb. This is like trying to get the Queen Mary out of port by taping a firecracker to her stern.

"The Core" has a backup plan, in case this quixotic mission fails. There's a massive, and mildly malevolent secret federal project somewhere in Alaska that might cure our planet of its circulatory problems. This is a tip of the Hollywood hat to HAARP, a real-life research project to use high power radio waves to study the ionosphere. Callers to late-night talk shows love to lambast HAARP as a government conspiracy to cook our brains.

Keep in mind as you watch this battle between good saviors and bad that changes in Earth's magnetic field happen all the time. The magnetic poles have actually flipped thousands of times over the past few billion years, sometimes rather rapidly (within a millennium or two.) None of this magnetic erraticism seems to have impeded biology's takeover of the planet.

But that's science, and movies aren't about what you would really learn in a geophysics course. This film may play fast and easy with the facts, but it still delivers a good time. Just check your core beliefs before entering the theater.

Big 'Hole' in the Sun Unleashes Space Weather

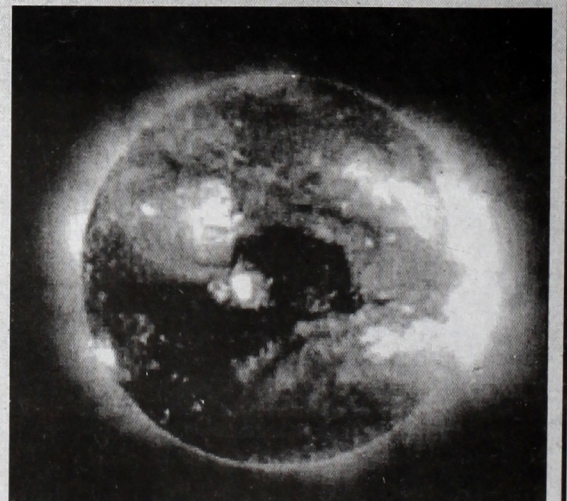
www.Space.com

A large coronal hole in the Sun appears to extend across about one fifth of this side of the Sun, the largest seen in about year or more, said scientists with the SOHO observatory (a joint project of NASA and ESA) who released this image.

Coronal holes appear as dark areas of the Sun's atmosphere, or corona, when viewed in ultraviolet light and in X-rays. The magnetic field lines in a coronal hole extend out into the solar wind rather than connecting to a nearby part of the Sun's surface.

The holes are often the source of strong solar wind gusts that carry solar particles out to Earth's magnetosphere and beyond. Solar wind streams take 2-3 days to travel from the Sun to Earth, and they are more likely to affect Earth after they have rotated more than halfway around the visible hemisphere of the Sun.

The hole has generated enhanced aurora activity at Earth, especially at high latitudes including the very northernmost reaches of the United States and Europe.



Double Feature Type Thing...

Star Wars vs. Star Trek The Eternal Battle of the Computer Geeks....

by Matt Kent
Fictional Editor

I don't think there is a single person out there who hasn't seen at least one episode of Star Trek, or one of the Star Wars movies. Geeks everywhere are waging a war of words to determine which will be crowned the ultimate sci-fi series. Personally I couldn't give a toss, and I'm sure the sentiment is the same throughout the rest of the Lambda staff. But since some people have to have a winner, this comparison should put you Trekkies and Star Wars fans at ease. Or failing that, start a campus-wide nerd war. The whole idea is to find similar themes in each series, compare them and give a point to whomever is superior. The series with the most points at the end is the winner. Fair enough?

Round #1 - Lead Good Guys

Star Wars - Luke Skywalker, Yoda, Han Solo, Obi-Wan Kenobi and Princess Leia. Mark Hamill, Harrison Ford, Carrie Fisher and a warped little Muppet. The chemistry between these characters throughout the films is incredible. Even though they meet under some pretty ugly circumstances, the way they relate to each other makes it seem like they've known each other their entire lives. Add in a mysterious ghost who pops in from time to time to give a little morale boost and the usual sex interest and we've got the makings of a great team.

Star Trek - Captain Picard, Spock, Commander Riker, Scotty and Counsellor Troi. Even though I hate the 'old Star Trek, at least their characters were good for a laugh. The Next Generation's characters have about as much personality as a piece of driftwood. They constantly fight, and when you add in Riker's Shatner-ish behaviour with the ladies and his on-again off-again relationship with Troi, you have zero solidarity.

- Round one - Star Wars

Round #2 - Bad Guys

Star Wars - Darth Vader, the Emperor, and the Empire. Granted, these guys are extremely strong, but it is only one Force. One of the biggest weapons in war is fear. Does walking around with a bucket on your head, wheezing like an asthmatic really instill fear in the hearts of your enemies? "I can sense

the Force is strong in you." Perhaps, but do you sense the fleet of ships that's about to vaporise your ass? When the leader of your cause is a prime candidate for the geriatric ward, it's not a good sign. "Destroy them, and bring me my Depends undergarments!"

Star Trek - The Cardassians, The Borg, the Romulans and the Ferengi. Extreme violence, assimilation, mistrust and greed. Did the creators of Star Trek realise the symbolism they were creating when they thought up these characters? I'm sure there are a lot of races I neglected to mention but these are the four major ones. Here we have four different races, each with their own classes of ships, weapons and centuries of military experience. Add in the Borg's ability to make use of everything and anything they can get their hands on and this is a very powerful foe to be reckoned with, and these guys retire from time to time too to bring in fresh minds. Assimilation...hmm, reminds me of a certain superpower at work right now.

- Round two - Star Trek

Round #3 - Weird Looking Sidekicks

Star Wars - Chewbacca. He's a giant monkey! Only Han Solo can understand him. He understands all things technical and is a great shot but there's one question, if he's so smart, why doesn't he learn English? Now I'm an animal lover, and one thing I've learned, the bigger and hairier an animal is, the worse their smell. Where the hell is the rest of his kind? I don't remember seeing a single Wookiee in any of the movies. I know his species was enslaved, but if one can escape, you'd think the others could too?

Star Trek - Worf. He is a Klingon, which means he looks like the unfortunate offspring of an orangutan and a horseshoe crab. Worf is actually pretty cool. He speaks both his native tongue and English. He has honour and pride and respect for his superiors. He's a loving father, valiant warrior, he is the extreme personification of everything we as humans should strive for.

- Round three - Star Trek

Round #4 - Smart Robots

Star Wars - R2-D2 and C-3PO. R2-

D2 is basically a smart-assed walking trash can. And C-3PO....well, I won't even get started in on that guy. These two serve two purposes: C-3PO translates alien languages and R2-D2 has more hidden tools than a Swiss army knife, and the team works together to provide comic relief and cool sound effects.

Star Trek - Data and Lore. Data is an android, which is a free thinking, independent robot. Lore is his evil brother who is more advanced because he has been given an emotion implant. First, let's look at the flaws. Since Data and Lore were created by the same guy on the same frame, they are played by the same actor. Now while Brent Spiner is a hilarious actor, it just doesn't work. Did I mention that Data has no emotions? He can't even speak in contractions (words like can't and won't). Since he's free of emotion, he can operate solely on logic, but where's the fun in that?

- Round four - Star Wars

Round #5 - Flag Ship

Star Wars - The Millennium Falcon. Fastest ship in the galaxy. It used to belong to Lando Calrissian, but he lost it to Han Solo in some sort of bet, at which point Han fixed it up like an old Chevelle, making it one of the best fighters out there. Fast, manoeuvrable and armed to the teeth. If only it were more reliable.

Star Trek - The Enterprise. There are something like 5 or 6 models with this name, because they either have to keep upgrading it or they get blown up because the captain was too busy concentrating on green ladies. It's big and has weapons out the wazoo, but it's too unwieldy. The Millennium Falcon could kick its ass any day. Then Chewy could taunt them with his Wookiee calls.

- Round five - Star Wars

Round #6 - Hairballs

Star Wars - Ewoks. Midgets in fur coats with spears. Do you need a more detailed explanation? They run around throwing rocks and spears at Imperial soldiers. They sing and dance and make music. It's a Furby invasion! Still, I will admit that they are cool. They manage to kick ass when the rebels need their help defeating the Imperial Stormtroopers.

Star Trek - Tribbles. They're little



hairy hacky-sacks. They don't do much of anything. In one episode they manage to almost take over the whole Enterprise just by reproducing and laying in piles on the floor. They do nothing, say nothing, and influence the plot in no way. What the hell?

- Round six - Star Wars

Round #7 - Wisdom

Star Wars - Yoda. Is 900 years old. Looks like a dehydrated gremlin. But behind that wrinkled little visage is a world of wisdom. He has trained Jedi for over 8 centuries in the swamps of Dagobah. I don't think Yoda has ever been beaten in a fight. He's ultra powerful. I think his only problem is the way he talks.

Star Trek - Guinan. Well let's see, we're looking for an aged pillar of wisdom to provide support for the crew of our ship, and dispense drinks. Let's get Whoopi Goldberg! No. It just doesn't work. Sorry! You lose!

- Round seven - Star Wars

Round #8 - Annoying Youth Actors

Star Wars - Anakin Skywalker. These days, they don't let kids this young drive snowmobiles, but on Tatooine, they give them a pod racer that can almost break the speed of sound. This kid grows up to be Darth Vader! If someone had pulled a wire in the pod racer and let him eat a rock cut at 300mph they would have spared a lot of people.

Star Trek - Wesley Crusher. Fortunately for Anakin, I hate this little punk even more. He's a whiner, he does nothing, and he's only in half the episodes. He goes off to Starfleet Academy to become an ensign, and not long after he graduated the show ended. Coincidence?

- Round eight - Star Wars

Round #9 - Catch Phrases

Star Wars - "May the force be with you", "Luke, I am your father"(Vader), "Use the force Luke"(Yoda) and "Aurrueeaaagh!!" (Chewy)

Star Trek - "Space, the final

frontier..." (Kirk, Picard), "Dammit Jim, I'm a Doctor..." (Bones) and "Beam me up Scotty!" (Anyone who's ever been on an away mission).

- Round nine - Star Wars

Round #10 - Songs Inspired By Each Series

Star Wars - Liquid Tension Experiment - "Chewbacca", Weird Al Yankovic - "Yoda"

Star Trek - Um....try as I might, I can't find a single song for this category.

- Round ten - Star Wars

Round #11 - Languages

Star Wars - It seems a little too convenient that either the alien races all understand English, or the English speaking people understand all of these alien languages. This is based on no real evidence, but I would say that it takes the average person roughly a year to gain enough knowledge of a language to be able to carry on a conversation. It takes even longer to become fluent. Add in the normal time lost to social lives, military training, jobs, and so on, and it seems very unlikely that so many people just happen to all have an understanding of a bunch of different languages. Maybe I'm just an idiot, but this is my article and I'm sticking with it. (Editor's Note: Yes, you are!)

Star Trek - Why bother learning languages when you can rely on universal translators? Better yet, stick with your own native tongue, become part of the most powerful military force in the galaxy, and make everyone else learn your language.

Round eleven - Star Trek

And the winner with a score of 8 - 4 is Star Wars. Wow...now that I have actually had a chance to look it over, I'm surprised I ever liked Star Trek. Star Wars is just so much more fun! I didn't even get to talk about how I thought Jabba the Hutt looks like a giant talking turd! Oh well, maybe next time.

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The World Beyond the TV

by Matt Kent
Fictional Editor

For all of you sci-fi nuts out there, I thought I'd tell you that everything you know and love about space and aliens can be found in other places besides the television. It sickens me when I hear people say they haven't read a book since highschool. You people don't know what you're missing! These are my favourite sci-fi books and I encourage you to go out and get a copy, if you can find them.

U by Kenneth Johnson

Ok, I'll level, this actually was a TV miniseries, but it aired in 1983, and since I was 1 at the time I had no idea it actually was a TV show until recently when I saw the special DVD release.

What happens is that a race of aliens have come to earth seeking help. Their planet is dying and they need our help to manufacture chemicals and provide them with water so they can return home and possibly save their world. They look like us, talk like us and if we help them maybe they'll give us some of their technology. It all sounds great, and the aliens are quickly accepted by society and the human race readily helps them, but some people start to become suspicious when various political figures begin to help the aliens a little more than what would be expected. Before long, massive factories are being built to assist the aliens and a large number of people have disappeared. A resistance of ostracized scientists and random humans forms and discovers that the aliens, now known as the Sirians, have the ability to turn any human into an unwilling puppet and they are not only stealing water, but humans too, as food. The species travels from planet to planet harvesting life to keep their species alive. Since the Sirians can control people's minds, no one believes the resistance. It's really a great tale of people surviving against all odds.

V is your classic conspiracy book where the hero and heroine are believed by none but their close friends. The odds are stacked against them to a degree only seen in the story of David and Goliath. As if all that wasn't enough, there's also a young woman impregnated by one of the aliens, carrying either a super human child that will save them all, or a time bomb set to bring down the resistance from the inside. The suspense is amazing, and you're never really sure who will still be alive by the next chapter.

One thing you'll notice after reading it is that it bears a striking resemblance to Independence Day; I think someone got ripped off here. I can't give away too much more because it's not a long book, and I probably shouldn't have told you about the movie because now you're gonna go out and buy it on DVD. But I would like to make a plea, for the sake of your children, please, read the book! Think of the children!

Doom by Dafydd ab Hugh, and Brad Linaweaver

I know what you're thinking: "Doom? This guy is a total loser!" The funny thing is that if I'm such a loser, why did these books hit the bestseller list? Why were they reviewed by USA Today and GQ? The truth is, these books, despite their origins, are probably my favourite series ever, next to anything written by Tolkien.

The series is made up of four books, "Knee Deep in the Dead" "Hell on Earth" "Infernal Sky" and "Endgame". They outline the trials of Flynn "Fly" Taggart and Arlene Sanders. Mars and its two moons are taken over by alien creatures who are bent on eliminating the human race. Earth is quickly overrun and much of humanity has either become part of the monster horde or has joined them as traitors. A few isolated resistance groups still exist and some hope comes in the form of another friendly race of aliens. They have been at war with the invaders for thousands of years. The basis of this war is a disagreement over the holy texts, a set of books written by a race of aliens more ancient than earth itself. But if we were never a part of this war, why was Earth attacked? It seems that aside from humans, every other species evolves at an incredibly slow rate. Where it takes humans some thousand years to go from superstitious medieval peons to a space-travelling advanced species, it takes all other life forms millions of years. When the evil aliens looked at earth and saw that we were jumping from planet to planet, and remembered the condition we were the first time they visited us, they got scared. So they decided they would be better off to wipe us from the galaxy.

So our heroes go with the friendly aliens to the evil alien homeworld to destroy them only to find that the bad aliens have become extinct. The source of this extinction is a new species discovered by the evil aliens. This species goes from cavemen to space-faring in the span of a century. After destroying one species, the new aliens go travelling with the notion that they are the superior race, that all other races are "broken" and need to be fixed. They turn into intergalactic Nazis.

These books are written through the eyes of Fly and Arlene and dig deep into their souls. They look at Fly's past, his devotion, and his feelings about his friends. Why can't they have more books like this? Deep and reflective, yet really fun and really gory at the same time. These books were published by Pocket Books, and I don't know if they're even in print anymore. I really advise everyone to go out and find a copy of each, as you won't be disappointed. What makes a book good is how well the reader can identify with the characters and get lost in the plot. Believe me, you will lose yourself, and you'll enjoy it.

Space Terms

Guaranteed to Impress That Klingon Girl Down the Hall!

Ever get really confused while watching Star Trek? When Capt. Pickard says something like "Set a course for the Narcis Nebula, Warp 7.." do you take on the facial expression of a deer caught in the headlights of an oncoming transport? Well here is our comprehensive glossary of terms that are common in science fiction.

Aestivalis: one of many incarnations of a style of war machine. **GIANT FIGHTING ROBOTS!**

Anomaly: something that, according to all rules of physics, biology, etc.. Should not exist, but does. Usually these are accompanied by weird flashing lights, funny sounding creatures, or someone being vaporised in an explosion.

Antimatter: matter made up of antiprotons, positrons, and antineutrons. Possibly the key to new sources of energy.

Black Holes: when a star more than 1.5 times the mass of the sun collapses upon itself and the resulting stellar body has it's mass so concentrated that it generates a tone of gravity. so much gravity that everything that comes close to it, including light is pulled in.

Carbonite: a quick freezing gas used to ship things between planets. Also useful for freezing pesky rebels like Han Solo.

EMP: An abbreviation of Electromagnetic Pulse. This is a technology that would be worth a lot if we could create it. When a nuclear bomb explodes, it sets off an electromagnetic blast that is roughly the same size as the nuclear blast radius. This pulse disrupts any electronic device it hits, so cars, computers, watches, anything with a circuit will shut down. For how long we don't know. But an EMP cannon could be used to paralyse an opponents fleet of ships or knock fighter craft out of the sky without blowing them to pieces and leaving all kinds of background radiation.

Graviton Cannon: A graviton is a subatomic particle that essentially carries the force of gravity. A graviton cannon (in theory) would blast out a beam of these particles which, when they hit their target, would do one of two things: 1) since they are carrying gravity, they would hit with a force unparalleled by anything known to man, or 2) since gravity is related to the mass of objects, the particles would attach themselves to the target and literally crush it.

Hyper drive: the Star Wars equivalent of Warp drives. Using different technology but similar results. The engines make the Time-space matrix ripple and the ship essentially surfs along these ripples.

Inertial Dampers: When something changes direction, G forces are exerted on it and everything inside it. Take for example a ship. When the ship blasts off, everything inside the ship will be forced in the opposite direction because of normal relativity. Inertial dampers are special devices found on ships that eliminate this so that when the Enterprise jumps to warp speed the crew isn't reduced to a fine red paste on the back wall of the bridge.

Matter/Antimatter reaction chambers: this is the main power source of the Enterprise. Mix matter and Antimatter in a special chamber and the two will destroy each other creating a pant load of energy.

Neutrinos: extremely small subatomic particles. They have almost no mass and no electrical charge, but for some reason every species in the galaxy uses them for something. Personally I think they use them just to make cool sounding phrases like "Neutrino emissions". They occur frequently in stars.

Positrons: same scale as Neutrinos, they're what powers the small supercomputers that power Data's brain.

Rail Gun/Cannon: using electromagnets instead of explosives (gunpowder) these guns can theoretically launch slugs at almost the speed of light. What this boils down to is simply, whoever has this gun, has the power, because there isn't an armour known that could withstand this much power.

Ram Scoop: This is a device that collects interstellar dust and particles to be used in a ships engines. Picture a huge electromagnetic net spread out in front of the ship, this net collects the space junk and funnels it through the ship to the reaction core where it combines with other forms of matter and blasts out the back end. Kinda like my uncle at thanksgiving. I've actually run across this in other places than just Star Trek. As a matter of fact, I have heard stories that NASA has been trying to figure out how to make this a reality.

Special Relativity: Basically what this means is that the faster a container goes, the slower time within that container will move. If you could put a space shuttle a few hundred thousand miles into space and then accelerate it to the speed of light, then look into one of the windows with a super powerful

telescope, the people inside would seem to be frozen in time. If the people in the ship were to look back at earth, everything would be happening at a blistering pace. This is the main flaw with Star Trek and Star Wars, if these ships are all blasting around at well over the speed of light, that means that time on every other planet is screaming by. By the time the Millennium Falcon gets to Tattooine, everyone on that planet has turned to dust and the evil people have taken over.

Time-Space Continuum: Thank Einstein for this one. We see everything in terms of three dimensions. Location, direction, and movement. But Einstein believed there was a fourth piece, Time. Because it takes time to do things, and things happen over time. What does this have to do with Sci-fi? No clue! But it makes for some fun storylines involving time travel

TREKKIE: someone who likes Star Trek, but not obsessed over it. They might go to a convention. If they did, you could bet dollars to doughnuts a Trekkie would never get dressed up in silly Klingon garbs, or wear Vulcan ears.

TREKKER: They're the religious fundamentalists of Star Trek aficionados. Truly [I don't mean to be a bubble burster here dudes] GEEKS! Trekkers are the hyper aficionados of Star Trek who wear "Klingon" garb, Vulcan ears, buy anything and everything Star Trek, & think William Shatner is a guy Captain Kirk once played in a school play in Iowa when a boy. Trekkers are the human entertainment at conventions. To a Trekker, existence begins, ends, & is surrounded/ inundated by, & is Star Trek.

Warp: This is completely fictional because nothing can travel faster than the speed of light except subatomic particles. What the Warp drive does is create a warp field around a ship where the rules of physics seem to not apply. It makes big ships go really fast.

Wormholes: If you have two black holes that are close together, they could produce a gravity field so strong that it would cause space and time to curl and form a wormhole. if the wormhole was big enough, we might be able to use it to travel vast distances very quickly. This is all according to Stephen Hawking, who is a weeeeeee bit smarter than I am so it's a little difficult to describe just how it works.

For more definitions by sad, lonely people, try these links.

[The completely unofficial Star Wars Encyclopedia.](http://www1.theforce.net/CUSWE/search.asp?search=mass+reducing&EandD=EyDy&no=100)
<http://www1.theforce.net/CUSWE/search.asp?search=mass+reducing&EandD=EyDy&no=100>

[The Ultimate Star Wars Vs. Star Trek Database](http://h4h.com/louis/vsfaq.html)
<http://h4h.com/louis/vsfaq.html>

SPACE ROCK!

Rock it to the Moon!

by Steve Kraus
Contributor

"Space Rock comes in many forms: it can be sparse and open with a faint hint of vocal, or it can be a thick wall of swirling sound textures continuously unfolding. What unites these disparate styles is a hypnotic and laid back groove, often accentuated with echoing guitar effects and haunting vocal production. This style of music originated in the early '70s with bands like Pink Floyd and Hawkwind, who combined ethereal production, clear melodies, and alienated lyrics. Later, bands like My Bloody Valentine and Flying Saucer Attack cranked up the sonic intensity, while still maintaining a stark vulnerable vocal buried beneath the mire. Space Rock, in any form, is music to disappear into or float above". ~David Revelli, MSN Music

All right ladies and gentlemen, this is a message from ground control to the LU student population. If you haven't already signed up for the rocket trip to the musical mantra center of the universe, then it's about damn time you did. A space-themed Lambda deserves the proper musical treatment to follow, and thus we enter the realm of space rock. Sit back, buckle up and hang on.

Much like the unpredictable and seldom-definable realm of outer space, space rock isn't exactly a style or a genre because many of the bands that fall under this umbrella aren't solely space rockers. For my purposes, I'll explore some contemporary and some rare space rock. For your reading pleasure, I'll give you a guide into the three musical dimensions as follows: Pink Floyd, the Sons of Otis and UFOmammot. This is by far not a comprehensive view of space rock, but it should lay down the basics for you to explore on your own as you all drift through the cosmic sounds...

I figured that by taking Pink Floyd, a common reference point that many of you are familiar with, it would be easier to make the jump into the more obscure and weird realm of space rock. As many of you know, Pink Floyd is renowned as a psychedelic band, more so than anything else. Putting them under the umbrella of space rock is perhaps a bit of a stretch, considering songs like "Another Brick in the Wall" and the like aren't really that spacey. But if we take it back to the early days of Pink Floyd, we arrive at a total space rock holy grail. In an ironic twist, one of my friends over Christmas brought me down Pink Floyd Live At Pompeii. Now that, ladies and gentlemen, is space rock! I'd recommend that trip into absurdity to any Pink Floyd fan or anyone who just wants to watch a trippy sequence of old school visual

effects and transcendental music. Focusing on material from their "Meddle... record and a few choice prizes from the early days of Floyd, they successfully create a monolithic space jam fest in the setting of the ancient forum at the base of Mt. Vesuvius, with a spacey set featuring: Echoes pt1, Careful with that axe, Eugene, One of These Days I'm Going to Cut You Into Little Pieces, Set the Controls for the Heart of the Sun, Mademoiselle Knobs, Echoes pt2. This is a visual documentary/concert to the gods of the realm beyond. The audience of this film is taken aback by the sheer volume and sheer musicianship displayed by Floyd in perhaps their most creative and exploratory period of their careers. I am by far no expert on Floyd, and I'll admit that, at first, I didn't fully appreciate the Pompeii experience, but in retrospect, it was a trippy and well-done for 1972. Don't expect dazzling effects, don't expect out of this world cinematography; just take it as it is, a musical masterpiece, and perhaps a giant musical antenna broadcasting spacey sounds trying to conjure the unknown and linking man with outer space through a purely musical connection. Pink Floyd never did push the visual in the early days. Their spacey-ness was conjured purely from their music. Consider their early work as a swirling vortex of pure outer space sounds. The Psychedelic influence allowed Floyd to create soundscapes, not merely songs or singles as modern music is so primarily focused on delivering. They were creating soundtracks for things beyond the perceptions of the average listener. I treat the music of Pink Floyd from a purely experiential dimension, because that is how I enjoy it. I realize that this observation is perhaps a pale attempt to try and convey the impact of Pompeii, but from an inexperienced and uneducated Floyd admirer, this is how I saw their concert. It was passionate, magnificent and powerful. It brought me, the watcher, to a completely new realm, to another plain of appreciation. Pink Floyd where perhaps the most successful group when it came to creating the foundations of space rock and presenting it to the masses.

Many of you have probably experienced Floyd on some kind of level at some point in your lives. As I mentioned earlier, it is a perfect and useful stepping stone to move into some bands of a more obscure nature. The qualities of space rock focus around a framework that is in essence a modification of the psychedelic genre. Space Rock, as its name suggests, is music that will hopefully transport its listener to another dimension, to another plain of the experience. This experience is achieved by using technology to create radical sounds, which

exhibiting characteristics of swirling, jagged, radical, fluctuating bits of sound. From a guitarist's perspective, effects like chorus, flange, tremolo, ring modulation, delay, rotary speakers and wah-wah pedals are all common tools in the creation of sounds which sound like they were born in the cosmic realms.

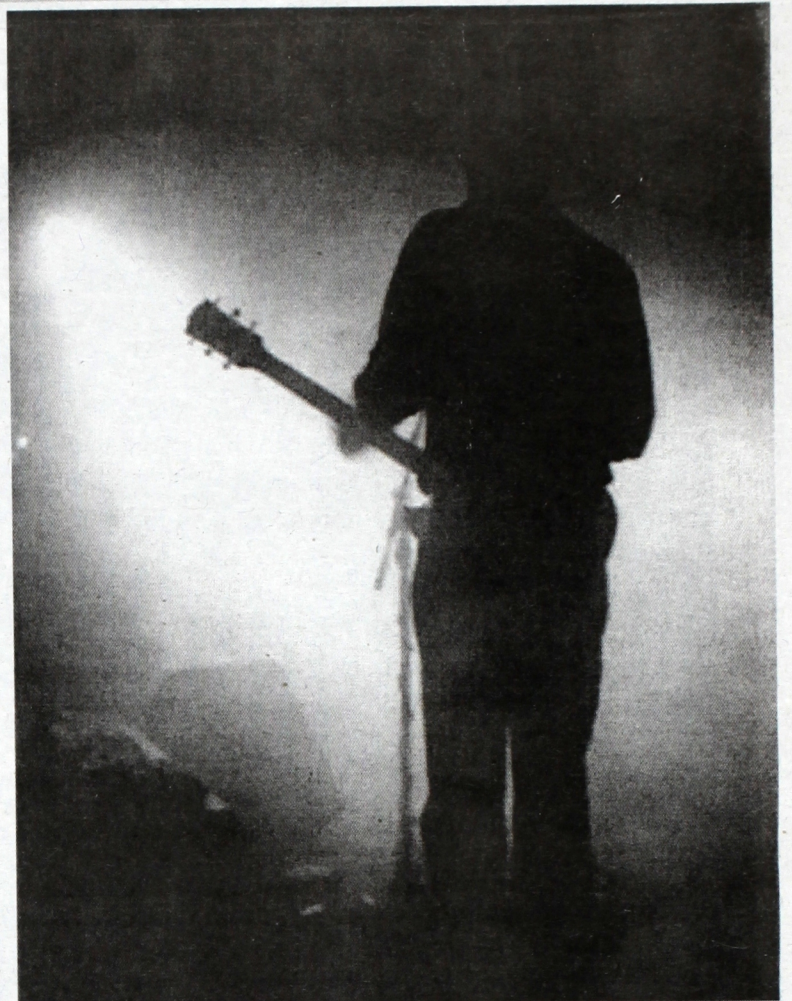
In combination with a solid rhythm section and powerful off-the-wall singing and lyrics, these oddities create the ideally sought-after textures of space rock. Like David Bowie and his more eccentric project, "Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders From Mars", Pink Floyd kept the focus on spacey music and not spacey staging or wild antics. There is a difference: many space rockers sought the ideal mix between an outer-space oriented stage presence, and spacey toned music. Stage presences are perhaps attempts at compensating for what was lacking in the music. Pink Floyd in particular achieves landmark achievements in the sub-genre of space rock without dressing up like aliens or dawning astronaut suits in hopes of enhancing the vibe.

Underground examples of space rock hold true to this ideology as fostered by Pink Floyd. As my previous article on Kyuss and Queens of the Stone Age demonstrated, the lines defining musical genres are often blurred to create something new. This is indeed the case when it comes to bands like the Sons of Otis, and UFOmammot. These rockers both create spacey textures with tuned-down riffage, spawned directly from the book of Black Sabbath. If Black Sabbath were a band from Mars, then they would have probably churned out sounds like those of Sons of Otis and UFOmammot. But luckily, for our listening pleasure, these two relatively unknown bands have spawned an interesting offshoot of the now-common Black Sabbath type of dar, and heavy rock formula.

Here's the bio straight from the horse's mouth regarding my first underground space rock example, The Sons of Otis:

"If the Bermuda Triangle or Twilight Zone existed in the Canadian music scene, then Toronto's Sons of Otis would be their prime resident. Known for their trance-like neuron-firing live performances which include spinning lights and smoke machines, Sons of Otis prove to audiences everywhere that they can summon spaceships and create supernovas.

The seed was planted in late 1992 by the trio's founder/guitarist/vocalist Ken Baluke, an export from Detroit, Michigan. The band was originally dubbed Otis, in homage to the character of the same name in the cult film Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer.



Just before their first full-length disc SpaceJumboFudge was released in 1996, the band had to affix 'Sons Of' in front of their name due to a legal conflict with a US band with the same name. SpaceJumboFudge was to be the only album to come out of the record deal. It trickled over to Europe where it garnered legendary status among fans of the 'heavy music' genre. Soon after its release, a plethora of problems arose with their label which led to a nullification of their contract.

In the summer of 1998, these same vibrations were felt in San Francisco, a place that is no stranger to seismic activity. One character awoken up by this bowel-rumbling heaviness was infamous poster artist Frank Kozik, head guru of Man's Ruin records. The resulting product is Templeball, the band's second full-length release. After a European tour with Electric Wizard, and finally settling on a temporary studio and live drummer, Tony Jacome (Shallow North Dakota), the band entered the studio for their debut release for The Music Cartel. The result is Songs For Worship. Songs contains some of the most organically dense and psychedelic riffage known to man.

With the final piece of the Otis puzzle falling into place in the form of permanent drummer Ryan Aubin, the band is set for the album's release September 11, 2001 and worldwide touring will commence shortly thereafter." (Thanks to sonsototis.com).

The Sons of Otis is a band that shows absolutely no care for trends or mass popularity, and just goes out to do their thing and play the music that they love. If you metal heads out there think you are familiar with sludge? Guess again. As I described to one of my friends, Sons of Otis sound like a musical wall of molasses: Thick, Dense, Sticky and Heavy. As weird as this description may seem, it quantifies their sound perfectly. Check out their website for some sound clips, and it'll prove that I am not exaggerating. In between

being transported to another realm with their spacey sounds, your feet will be glued to the floor by the sheer power, intensity and stickiness of this cosmic goo, called sludge/space rock.

UFOmammot, like their name suggests, is a mystery from beyond the cosmos. Their website, like their music, is spacey and cryptic, and paints soundscapes with samples from sci-fi movies, spliced with super heavy space rock. Much like their brothers in the heavens, the Sons of Otis, UFOmammot are schooled in the arts of Black Sabbath. But they employ keyboards at high volume to crank out spacey, mysterious textures beneath and intermingled with overwhelming walls of heaviness. They lace it with vocals that seem to be emanating from deep space, which resembles — for a lack of a better description — a guy yelling through a megaphone in the middle of a stadium. The echoes and the reverberated textures of UFOmammot create serious ethereal tones.

Like a true cosmic mystery, UFOmammot are presenting themselves to the world as an alternative to the overzealousness that seems to dominate the airwaves. Sure, cosmic rock might not be everyone's first choice to listen to, but this spacey sludge has merit. It's coming at you from a musical dimension that most people don't even know about. It's got heavy grooves, spacey sounds you'd expect from cheesy sci-fi, which in a sense gives their music an almost comic element.

Well, as the deadline approaches, so does our time in outer space. Check out these rocking bands and indulge yourself with some Live at Pompeii with Pink Floyd, all cosmic trips you all won't forget anytime soon. Rock It to the Moon!

Sexual Star Wars

Star Wars

- * "Get in there you big furry oaf, I don't care what you smell!"
- * "Luke, at that speed do you think you'll be able to pull out in time?"
- * "Put that thing away before you get us all killed."
- * "You've got something jammed in here real good."
- * "Aren't you a little short for a stormtrooper?"
- * "You came in that thing? You're braver than I thought."
- * "Sorry about the mess..."
- * "Look at the size of that thing!"
- * "Curse my metal body, I wasn't fast enough!"
- * "She may not look like much, but she's got it where it counts, kid."

The Empire Strikes Back

- * "I thought that hairy beast would be the end of me."
- * "Size matters not. Judge me by my size, do you?"
- * "There's an awful lot of moisture in here."
- * "But now we must eat. Come, good food, come..."
- * "That's okay, I'd like to keep it on manual control for a while."
- * "Hurry up, golden-rod..."
- * "I must've hit it pretty close to the mark to get her all riled up like that, huh kid?"
- * "Possible he came in through the south entrance."
- * "And I thought they smelled bad on the outside!"
- * "Control, control! You must learn control!"

Return of the Jedi

- * "Hey, point that thing someplace else." (Han)
- * "I look forward to completing your training. In time you will call me master." (Emperor)
- * "You're a jittery little thing, aren't you?" (Leia)
- * "I never knew I had it in me." (C3PO)
- * "There is good in him, I've felt it." (Luke)
- * "If I told you half the things I've heard about this Jabba the Hutt, you'd probably short circuit." (C3PO)
- * "I assure you, Lord Vader, my men are working as fast as they can." (Jerrod) Reply: "Perhaps I can find new ways to motivate them." (Darth)
- * "Grab me, Chewie. I'm slipping — hold on. Grab it, almost...you almost got it. Gently now, all right, easy, easy, hold me, Chewie. Chewie!" (Han) With: "A little higher, just a little higher." (Lando)
- * "Short help's better than no help at all." (Han)
- * "Hey, Luke, thanks for coming after me — now I owe you one." (Han)

One Dark Night

Fiction by Frederique Choem

It's about 3:00 a.m. The house is completely still, the only sounds are the crickets chirping outside and the humming of the fan I keep beside my bed. Nothing can wake me. I am the kind of person who literally sleeps through an earthquake. Remember the 2000 New Year's? Y2K? Well that year, the North Bay area was actually subjected to an earthquake at about 5 or 6 a.m. I didn't get to experience it, however, because I was sawing logs.

Anyway, it's a night like any other, and the only sound is my breathing. Everything is still, everything is calm, and you could cut the tension with a machete. Suddenly, my eyes snap open. My heart is racing, I can feel it hammering in my chest like a caged gorilla. I'm scared, and I don't know why. I wasn't having a nightmare, and yet I'm petrified. Something has driven me out of my peaceful slumber. Something unseen, yet ominous, it fills me with fear and paralyzes me. I want to get up and run, grab my pants, and grab the battleaxe replica I have hanging over the front door. It may be a replica, but it's still extremely sharp and will do a lot of damage.

I try to stand up but my legs just refuse to respond. It's as if there was a giant concrete slab laying on top of me. I've always been claustrophobic, and now this feeling of being restrained causes my fear to jump to that next level, one of blind panic. If I were able to move, I would have made my exit through the large window beside me. Due to a fear that whatever is causing this might be outside, my desire to escape is that much greater. As I lay there shaking, a new sensation becomes the dominant one. A presence is near; not in the room, but near. I'm not a clairvoyant, I'm not like Counsellor Troi on Star Trek, but I know that something or someone is watching me.

A pulsing sound begins to fill the room. A humming not unlike the fan, but louder and varying in intensity from quiet to loud and back. I don't know where it's coming from. There isn't a machine in my room that can make this sound, and even if there were, nothing is turned on except for the fan and my alarm clock. Another thing I have noticed is that the once-strong breeze that was wafting in through my window has stopped. The trees outside are still, or at least I assume they are, because the blinds were drawn before I went to bed. If they were up, I would probably be able to see the trees standing motionless, though if they were up I might also see the source of my panic. I feel like a mouse, trapped beneath the paws of a young cat. One old enough and fast enough to catch me, but not old enough yet to figure out what to do with me. So it just stands on me, looking at me, studying me, trying to figure out what use I am. I am the mouse, pinned, waiting to see what happens. Perhaps the cat will set me free, but there is always the notion that the cat is a predator: I am prey, my time may be at its end.

Darkness. The grey world of my night time room is gone. I can neither see nor feel anything. The invisible restraint that was holding me down is now gone. Even if it were still here it would be useless because there is no longer a down. I am drifting or floating. There is nothing around me I can see. Reaching out into the darkness only reveals more darkness. I think I am upright, but without some form of visual aid I can't be sure. I don't even feel any gravity pulling on me. It's not as though I am weightless, because that carries with it a very distinct feeling, but I am certainly not standing, sitting or laying on anything. I try to run, but my feet find no purchase to propel me forward. The air is completely empty, no light, no sound, no smell, not even any feeling. I hold my hand in front of my face, I even slap myself a couple of times. Even though I feel the sting of my fingers on my face, I see nothing. I didn't know there could be such emptiness as this, yet here it is...or rather isn't. I'm still afraid, but I'm not sure why. There is nothing here to be afraid of. There's nothing here at all. I call out to whomever may be listening, but no one answers. Why would they? Though I'm screaming my head off, there is no sound. There is nothing. I feel like a marionette, suspended in mid air, but there are no strings.

Flash. A brilliant blast of red light. Only a fraction of a second in duration, but so intense that even after it has gone I can still feel it resonating through my body. It has been absorbed by my body as if it were some sort of moisturizing lotion and I can still feel it within me. It has concentrated behind my eyes, and like sinus pressure it pushes out from inside my skull. I feel like my head will explode, and then it is gone. It vanishes in the same manner as my world did before.

Flash. This time the light is blue. Cold, it embraces me like the frigid air of a January night. Instead of seeping deep into my core, it envelops me and replaces my skin. I can see myself now, except where there once would have been the pale pink skin with a thin dusting of body hair, there is now only a blue energy. I hold my hand before my face. It's as if I were nothing more than a wireframe on a computer animator's laptop. My internals begin to appear beneath the "skin." I can watch my muscles and joints work as I clench and open my fist. There is only a mild fear now, for I am in awe of myself. I suddenly begin to marvel at the delicacy and intricacy with which my body has been constructed. No machine is known that can match the complexity and versatility of my body. But why am I suddenly focused on my hand? The blue light has long faded.

I am back in my bed, on my back, staring at my hand which is held before my face. The fan, the crickets, the chattering of trees and leaves outside. The clock says 3:21 a.m. What just happened? Was I really out of my home? Did I just magically transport myself to a place beyond existence? Or did someone or something remove me from where I was at peace? Was there some stronger force at work? Something we have suspected, but have never been able to prove? I have always been a believer that we are not alone, and this may be my proof. Right? Isn't it? Well at least they didn't probe me.

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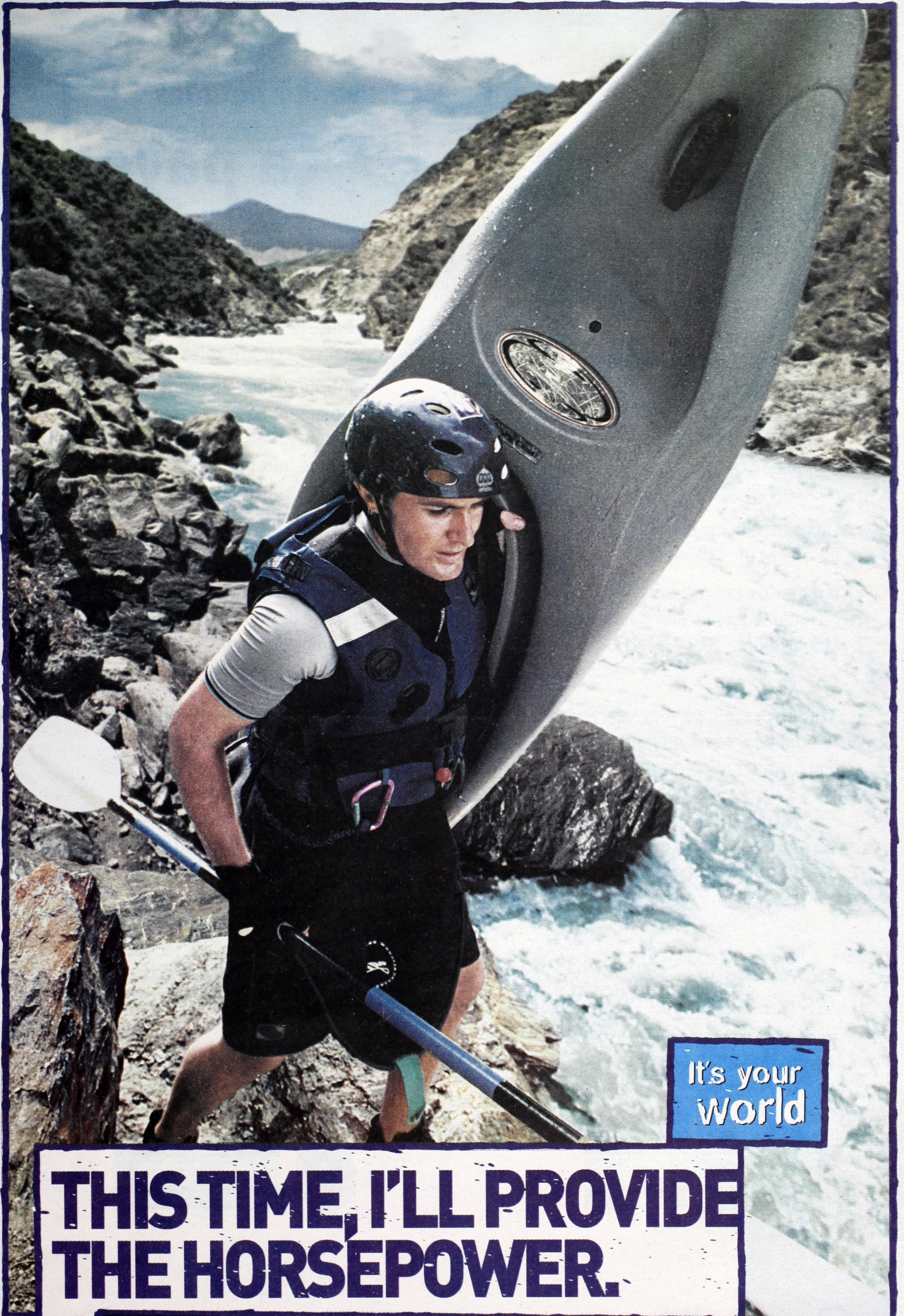
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